

Hangar Digest

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From The Editor

When rain ruins the best-laid plans: our grand reopening has been delayed until Columbus Day, October 13, 2003.

Due to a record breaking spring and early summer rainfall, the new fence and the road construction could not proceed as planned. However, on the brighter side, this delay has given us the opportunity to offer more events and exhibits than we had originally scheduled. So, plan on an exciting visit.

In the October 2002 issue of the Hangar Digest the museum's curator, Jim Leech, wrote that we would be constructing a memorial to those who lost their lives at the Pentagon on 9/11/01. This memorial was to be dedicated on 9/11/03. Due to problems with contractor negotiations this date was not met. However, we are pursuing this matter and I hope to have a more positive report in January.

Hundreds of thousands of people had the opportunity to see our P-51 Mustang "Bunny" while it was in New York City during the Air Force's Centennial of Flight Exposition at Rockefeller Center. The airplane, painted to replicate the original aircraft of Captain Roscoe Brown, commander of the 100th Fighter Squadron during WWII and the first Tuskegee Airman to shoot down a German Me 262, was exhibited along with our F-16 Fighting Falcon. In addition to the museum's aircraft, the Expo included full-scale replicas of the Wright Flyer, the Mercury Redstone Rocket, a space shuttle cockpit and a lunar module.

Good News! The contributions to the C-124 Project now exceed \$31,000.

Finally, on behalf of the museum's board of directors, the museum's staff and volunteers, I extend our best wishes for a safe and happy Holiday season.

Harry E. Heist, **Editor**



December 17, 1903

LOOKING BACK

Recently a MAC aircrew man asked why prices for flight lunches have climbed from 40 cents to 90 cents for officers and 50 cents for airmen. MAC officials report that the Department of Defense took over the flight lunch program and for economic reasons found it necessary to up the price. Officials suggest that the thrifty-minded try in-flight "snack packs". Generous amounts of flight-approved food — and the price is right, 35 cents.

Source: MAC Aircrew Newsletter, April 1970.

From the Director

In late July my wife Claudia accompanied me to the grand opening of the Centennial of Flight Exposition that opened in Rockefeller Center in New York City. The reason I wanted to attend, besides an excuse to visit NYC, was that two aircraft from our museum were stars of the show. Many months ago someone from the Pentagon called and asked if we would mind lending them our P-51 Mustang and the F-16 we store for the 11th Wing at Bolling AFB in DC. I told them they would have to get permission from the Air Force Museum in Ohio, I assumed that was the last I'd hear about moving planes to NYC. Little did I know...

Turns out they really wanted those airplanes and it was going to be a big opportunity for the Air Force to support the event. So on a bright sunny morning there we stood on the street in front of the NBC Today studio looking at the F-16 sitting right there beside a Predator remote piloted drone, a Redstone Rocket and an Apollo command module. A hundred yards away, under a tent to protect the more vulnerable planes, was our P-51 Mustang sitting beside a Fokker Triplane and a flying replica of the 1903 Wright Flyer.

Neil Armstrong opened the exposition, which featured the latest in technology including new jet engines over twice as powerful as the ones on the C-5. There was real-time satellite imagery and other state-of-the-art wonders. But the real stars of the show were the old aircraft. I stopped to admire our Mustang and to check that it was being treated well and recognized a WASP pilot. She flew Mustangs during World War II from the factory to modification plants. We stood talking and soon a crowd formed listening to her exploits. It was a great show and a great opportunity for the general public to see some Air Force History. By the time you read this, the Mustang will be back in our hangar and the F-16 will be out on the ramp on display back from their visit to the big city.

Recently Marty Batura and the pros from Worldwide Aircraft Recovery, Ltd., arrived to reassemble our Super Constellation. It would have been challenging enough just to put a plane the size of the Connie together if everything was new and in good shape. However, the wings had been cut off at the wing roots, the landing gear and engines had been disposed of years ago and all of the hardware to put the tail and other major parts back on were long gone. Some years ago, Jim Leech lead a team to Florence, South Carolina to retrieve replacement gear and engines removed from a Navy WC-121 with little assurance they would fit a civilian version.

The Worldwide team, with the able assistance of our own Rich Breckenridge, got right to work positioning the fuselage in order to reattach the wings. Marty fabricated eight wing attach splices that were absolutely works of art. The Dover AFB Sheet Metal Fabrication Branch added just the right bend to four of them and in less than three days they were on the airplane. Next the landing gear was to be fitted but a huge problem became evident. One of the massive landing gear trunions that carries the load from the gear to the fuselage was too badly exfoliated to use. We were at an impasse. TSgt. Clarence Cole from the 512th EMS Fabrication Branch came to the rescue by grinding away all of the corroded metal and building it back by using high tech aluminum welding. In just over 24 hours the piece was returned, it looked brand new and it fit perfectly.

Soon the gear was back in place for the first time in over 15 years and the mounting of the four engines followed. Now we have several years worth of restoration to turn a civilian Super Constellation into an Air Force C-121.

Ironically most of the handful of Constellations still flying for civilian preservation operations were former military planes converted to look like civilian versions. Due to the fact that this was the only Connie we had a reasonable chance of acquiring we are going to do the opposite. The Military Air Transport Service (MATTS) flew over 70 of the graceful C-121s for many years. The last were retired from National Guard units and Navy patrol units many years ago. Within a few years ours will be ready to take its place on the ramp with the other important airlifters that our dedicated volunteers and contractors have helped preserve. Like I said, I love watching the pros at work, we're lucky, we are blessed with many real pros on our team. Cheers!

AMC's Contribution to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM

TSgt Theresa Lashley

436th Airlift Wing Historian

When the editor asked that I prepare an article about the Air Mobility Command's contributions to IRAQI FREEDOM, I knew there would be a lot to write about but I had no idea of the variety of ways AMC contributed and continues to contribute towards the military operations in Iraq. The following is a mere taste of the feats accomplished by those attached to AMC.

November 2002: AMC aircraft begin providing airlift support for the massive buildup in support of operations in Iraq.

March 2003: C-17 Globemaster III crews from McChord AFB, Washington and Charleston AFB, South Carolina participated in the first ever combat personnel airdrop from the C-17. In four days, C-17s airdropped an entire brigade of more than 2,000 troops and 400 vehicles, all with a 100% mission success rate.

April 7, 2003: A KC-135 tanker crew from the 916th Air Refueling Squadron at McConnell AFB, Kansas received the Distinguished Flying Cross for supporting combat search and rescue efforts of a downed F-15E pilot inside Iraq.

April 12, 2003: Army Private First Class Jessica Lynch and 49 other injured service members were flown to Andrews AFB, Maryland from Germany via a C-17 aircraft. This marked one of the first times patient support pallets were used to return injured troops from the battlefield.

April 18, 2003: An AMC C-17 carried seven U.S. soldiers, once held as prisoners of war in Iraq, back to Fort Bliss, Texas.

April 24, 2003: Members of the Air Mobility Command Tanker Airlift Control Element off-loaded medical supplies from the first U.S. civilian aircraft to land on the commercial runway at Baghdad Airport.

May 2003: The first C-5 Galaxy landed at Baghdad Airport. The crew was assigned to Dover AFB's 3rd Airlift Squadron.

From the beginning seconds of the war until today, the men and women of the Air Mobility Command continue the legacy of delivering anything, anytime, anywhere.

TSgt Lashley has been attending the NCO Academy at McGuire AFB, New Jersey and though competing with her full academic schedule she found the time to contribute the foregoing.

Meet Museum Volunteer Joe Fournier

Joe has been the key member in supervising the day-to-day operations of the restoration of the museum's C-133 Cargomaster.

He entered the Air Force in 1953 with his first operational assignment as a crew chief on the North American B-45 Tornado; the first American four engine jet bomber to fly and the first jet bomber to go into production. He went on to crew the Douglas B-66 Destroyer, Boeing B-52 Stratofortress and the Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker. He has logged time in both the C-133 Cargomaster and the C-5 Galaxy as a flight engineer. When not working on the C-133, he enjoys reading, woodworking, working on his pickup truck and fishing. He is a veteran of the Vietnam War.

Joe hails from Franklin, New Hampshire retiring from the Air Force in 1973 with the rank of Master Sergeant. He now resides in Viola, Delaware.



An Airlift Remembered: Project "Fire"

On February 18, 1962 NASA announced Project Fire, a high-speed reentry research program designed to obtain data on materials, heating rates and radio signal attenuation on spacecraft reentering the atmosphere at speeds of 24,500 miles per hour. Information from the program would support technology for manned and unmanned reentry from lunar missions. Under the management of the Langley Research Center, Project Fire would use Atlas D boosters and the reentry package would be powered by an Antares solid-fuel motor. NASA awarded Republic Aviation the contract to build the experimental spacecraft and other companies would receive contracts for the communication systems and velocity packages. It was not known at the time but a C-124 crew from the 15th Air Transport Squadron, stationed at Dover AFB, would be a major player in supporting this program.

The crew's alert came early one morning during the last week in February 1964. The first leg of the special mission would take them to Greater Pittsburgh Airport in Pennsylvania to pick up their load. Upon arrival, the crew was met by representatives of the J.W. Fecker Division of the American Optics Company. Alongside the men stood a large object draped with protective oil-cloth and tarpaulins. The crew was to learn that the covered object was a very sophisticated telescope (telespectograph) weighing approximately 10,000 pounds. It stood over eleven feet tall, eight feet wide and eight feet in depth leaving but five inches of height clearance and 40 inches of width clearance for loading onto the C-124.

Twenty-five minutes were spent pre-planning before attempting to load the telescope. Two hours later the loading was complete and the crew was again airborne on their journey southward.

Hunter AFB in Georgia was the last stateside stop and after crew rest it was on to Zandery Airport in Paramaribo, Surinam (Dutch Guiana).

From Zandery, the crew flew a fifteen hour leg to Ascension Island which is located in the middle of the South Atlantic between South America and Africa. Upon arrival, the crew was descended upon by NASA and affiliate company representatives, including photographers and newsmen.

Heading the welcoming party were senior NASA representatives, physicists, the project engineer and project manager. The crew was thanked and commended for their timely arrival with the much needed cargo. The project's manager said, "it would be less than 72 hours before the telespectograph was prepared and ready for mounting."

It wasn't until later that evening that the crew was to learn the vital significance of their trip and cargo. According to the project manager, "this was the largest telescope ever delivered by air as a complete unit and it was airlifted to Ascension Island to be used for planning the re-entry of the Apollo space capsule." It was pointed out that the telescope had a recording lens of 36 inches and was six inches thick with an accuracy of one-tenth of a wave length of light or approximately two millionths of an inch. When the crew heard this they were glad the information was not available prior to accepting the telescope. After many thanks and handshakes the crew departed for their return trip to Surinam and to a well deserved crew rest.

Upon arriving back at Zandery Airport, it was found that the aircraft needed several repairs that would delay the crew's departure by four days. The crew, never known to turn down a good thing, headed to the jungle city of Paramaribo to the 100 year old Palace Hotel. A reception committee, including the hotel's owner and most of his employees, welcomed them and escorted them to their rooms. Following a short nap, the crew found a reserved table prepared for their dining pleasure with a special rate for their meal. The hotel had learned the crew was short of funds as they had not expected a four-day delay.

The hospitality has just begun. The hotel owners wife gave the men free passes to two movies in town and provided transportation. For those who preferred to stay at the hotel, free refreshments were served in the casino.

(Continued on the following page)

An Airlift Remembered (Cont.)

The next morning, cars were offered to the crew but were declined because of the left side of the road driving regulations. Instead, the hotel owner's wife and her sister chauffeured the crew to a private club for swimming and entertainment.

As all good things must end, we (yes, your editor was part of the crew) were on our way back to Dover with fond memories of some fine folks that were as sincere with their service as they were with their smiles.

We were to learn that two months later, on April 14th, an Atlas D launch vehicle lifted a model of the Apollo moon capsule from Cape Kennedy in the first test of the heat that would be encountered by a spacecraft reentering the atmosphere at lunar-return velocity. During the spacecraft's fall to earth, a solid-fuel Antares II rocket behind the payload fired for 30 seconds, increasing the descent speed to 25,166 miles per hour. The spacecraft's exterior reached an estimated temperature of 20,000 degrees Fahrenheit. About 32 minutes after launch, the spacecraft impacted into the Atlantic Ocean. "Our" telescope was used to visually follow the capsule's progress.

Sources: Lavalle, Jack *Dover AFB Airlifters Mar 4th & 11th, 1964*; *Encyclopedia Astronautica*; Heist, Harry *Memoirs*.

Museum Aircraft of the Quarter: Convair C-131D "Samaritan"

The C-131 is the USAF transport version of the Convair 240/340/440 series of commercial airliners.

The Convair-Liner 240 was the first post-World War II commercial transport developed primarily as the replacement for the Douglas DC-3. The prototype first flew at San Diego on 16 March 1947 and the first licensed aircraft was delivered to American Airlines on 28 February 1948. The first "C-131 Samaritan", derived from the 240, was delivered to the Air Force in 1954. It was similar to the T-29 trainer flown by the Air Force since 1949 to instruct navigators and bombardiers.



The Convair-Liner 340, although based on the Convair 240, was largely a new aircraft with a greater wing span. The first aircraft flew on 5 October 1951 and delivered to United Airlines on 28 March 1952. The USAF operated the 340 as the C-131 and VC-131 transports.

The Convair-Liner 440 Metropolitan first flew on 6 October 1955 and production was phased out in 1958. A few were operated by USAF and the US Navy.

The C-131 was acquired primarily for medical evacuation and personnel transport. While some were used for training, most saw duty as staff transports and a few were used for equipment testing. In fact, the first prototype of the Southeast Asia vintage side-firing "Gunship" used the C-131 airframe. Nearly all of the USAF's C-131s left the active inventory in the late 1970s; however, a few were still serving in Air National Guard units well into the 1980s.

The museum's C-131D was manufactured by the Convair Division of the General Dynamics Corporation in San Diego, California. In 1954 its first duty assignment was at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. In June 1975 it was transferred to the Air National Guard at Lincoln Municipal Airport, Nebraska and then in 1976 it was assigned to the 196th Tactical Fighter Group located at McEntire Air National Guard Base, South Carolina. It was transferred to the museum in October 1989.

The Hall of Heroes

On May 12, 1968, a C-123 Provider assigned to the 311th Air Commando Squadron and piloted by Lieutenant Colonel Joe Jackson took off from Danang Air Base in South Vietnam. The mission was to fly north toward the DMZ and back down the coast toward Chu Lai, stopping enroute to resupply several outposts. The mission went well when the crew received an unexpected message to return to home base.

Meanwhile, 45 miles to the southwest of Danang, near the Laotian border, a massive airlift operation was underway at Kham Duc. A steady stream of C-123s and C-130s shuttled into the isolated Special Forces camp to evacuate 1,000 friendly troops. Out-numbered, they had been under siege by communist forces for three days.

Back on the ground at Danang, Colonel Jackson and his crew were briefed on the emergency rescue operation. They were airborne again in less than an hour, heading southwest toward Kham Duc. As they flew inland the C-123 entered a holding pattern south of the camp.

The evacuation was hectic as an airborne command post controlled the flow of cargo planes into the short airstrip that lay unprotected on the valley floor. Forward air controllers directed fighter-bombers against the Vietcong positions surrounding the runway. As Colonel Jackson's aircraft moved closer to the camp, smoke and flames from exploding ammunition dumps and tracers from enemy weapons were clearly visible.

The radio chatter confirmed that the last survivors had been rescued and the command post directed the fighters destroy the camp and the enemy with it. But something was wrong. An animated voice on the radio warned that three US airmen had been left behind.

Attempts to contact the three combat controllers failed and the command post asked the C-123 ahead of Colonel Jackson to land and try to pick them up. As the Provider touched down it came under heavy fire and seeing no chance to locate the three airmen, the pilot jammed the throttles full forward and prepared for take-off. Just before liftoff the crew spotted the three controllers crouching in a ditch bordering the runway but it was too late to stop. The C-123 lifted off through a volley of bullets. Low on fuel, it headed for home base.

Joe Jackson had an answer for the question even before it was asked. Would he? There wasn't any question about it. There wasn't any decision to make. Of course he and his crew would attempt the rescue.

Colonel Jackson called on his previous fighter-pilot experience and decided to try a new tactic. He knew the Vietcong gunners would expect him to follow the same flight path as the other cargo airplanes. What if he could take an elevator approach straight down into the valley?

Nine thousand feet high and rapidly approaching the landing area, Colonel Jackson pointed the C-123's nose down in a steep dive. Taken by surprise, the enemy reacted in time to open fire as the diving Provider neared the airstrip. Breaking the descent just above the tree tops he settled down on the debris-littered runway and skidded to a stop. The three combat controllers scrambled from the ditch and were pulled onboard.

In the meantime a 122 millimeter rocket shell came to rest within 25 feet of the aircraft's nose. Luck was still on their side as the deadly projectile didn't explode.

Colonel Jackson taxied around the shell and rammed the throttles to the firewall. They hadn't been out of that spot for ten seconds when mortars began raining down. Just ahead tracers illuminated a murderous crossfire and there was no turning back. Slowly picking up speed, despite intense fire from the far end of the runway, the airplane broke ground as Kham Duc fell behind them.

For conspicuous gallantry and his profound concern for his fellowmen, Lieutenant Colonel Jackson received the Congressional Medal of Honor from President Lyndon Johnson on January 16, 1969.

Lieutenant Colonel Jackson was the Airlift/Tanker Association's "Hall of Fame" inductee for 1997.

Sources: *USAF Southeast Asia Monograph Series, Volume VII, Monograph 9; Airlift/Tanker Association*



The Museum Foundation Welcomes New Board Members

Friends of the museum reelected Mr. Leroy Klein, Lt Col Phil White and Ms. Mary Skelton to the Museum Foundation's Board of Directors. Mr. Richard "Dick" Caldwell and Col Robert Welsh, USAFR (Ret) were elected as the board's new members.

To new members Dick Caldwell and Bob Welsh and to those reelected, **congratulations!**

Officers appointed for the forthcoming year are:

President: Brig Gen Michael Quarnaccio, USAFR (Ret)

Vice President: TSgt Jay Schmukler, USAF (Ret)

Secretary: Lt Col Phil White, USAF (Ret)

Treasurer: MSgt Harry Van Den Heuvel, USAF (Ret)

C-121 Constellation Update

As Mike Leister mentioned, the crew from Worldwide Aircraft Recovery, Ltd., have gotten the Connie up on its gear. Arriving at Dover on 8 July and working for almost two weeks, the team prepared the airplane for the museum's staff and volunteers to begin the scratching, scraping, polishing and everything else that goes into the restoration of a long overlooked and forlorn aircraft. The airplane will be in restoration several years before it is ready to present to the public.



For those of you that are not familiar with the aircraft's most recent assignment, it was the "Constellation Lounge" mounted on top of a restaurant in Pennel, Pennsylvania. It was received by the museum in 1997.

If you would like to join the museum's volunteer staff and help with the restoration of the Connie, contact the museum's volunteer coordinator Janice Caldwell at (302) 677-5938. Your satisfaction is guaranteed!

Worldwide's next project for the museum is the disassembly and transfer of the C-124 from Omaha.

Artifact Facts by: Deborah Sellars

Space shuttle high-temperature reusable surface insulation (HRSI) is a big name for a small tile. These ultra-pure silica tiles developed by Lockheed Missiles and Space Company protect the space shuttle during re-entry when temperatures may reach as high as 2300°F.

To protect the shuttle and the astronauts from such intense heat, the tiles are bonded to pads which are then bonded to the shuttle. The pads isolate the brittle tiles from movement and deflection of the shuttle skin. As a result, temperatures on the shuttle's aluminum skin never exceed the design limit of 350°F.

The tiles are made of 99.7 percent pure silica fiber derived from high quality sand. They are lightweight, reusable and transfer heat so slowly that a tile can be held by the edges with a bare hand only seconds after being removed from a very hot oven. Heat rapidly escapes from the surface of the material before the interior heat has moved to the outside to replace it.

The tiles in the museum's collection were a gift from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. One tile is on display in our hands-on exhibit "What are aircraft made of?"



SHUTTLE TILE

Recommended Reading: AIRLIFT “The Illustrated History”

From the first tentative steps to use aircraft to supply ground troops during World War I to the outbreak of World War II, the development of military air transport was a slow process.

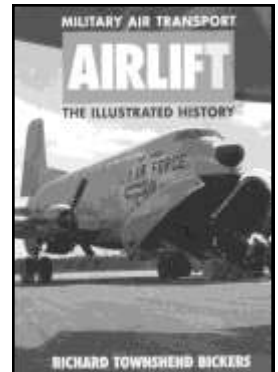
As World War II progressed, the need for powerful specifically-designed aircraft became apparent. Not only were forces supplied from the air—the famous “Hump” route from India to Burma and China— combat troops were also parachuted, with all their equipment, to specific target zones. The most famous of these was the airborne assault on Arnhem and culminating in the massive airborne attack in support of the D-Day landings.

Postwar military air transports were designed not only as troop and freight carriers but for more specific tasks, such as ferrying strategic missiles to various silo sites around the globe. Later the Lockheed C-141 Starlifter and the massive Lockheed C-5A Galaxy would be carrying troops and even battle tanks to the edge of the battle field.

This comprehensive and highly illustrated book traces the development of military air transport. The text is enhanced with first-hand accounts of both glider and powered transport aircraft missions. Illustrations, in color and black and white, have been carefully researched from military libraries and private collections from around the world.

This book is available from the museum’s gift shop and can be purchased for \$36.50 including shipping and handling payable by personal check, VISA or MasterCard.

Please call (302)677-5992 or e-mail: william.hardie@dover.af.mil to place your order.



December 17, 1903



During the 1880s and 90s, serious experiments with man-carrying gliders were carried out by Octave Chanute in Michigan and John J. Montgomery in California. Chanute’s book, *Progress in Flying Machines*, aroused considerable interest in the possibilities of flight. In 1885 James Means began publishing *Aeronautical Annuals*, giving up-to-date information on the latest aeronautical developments.

The experiments and the writings of these men stirred the imagination of others—including Samuel Langley of the Smithsonian Institution and Orville and Wilbur Wright of Dayton, Ohio. While Langley succeeded in building a model monoplane that flew, his man-carrying machine of a similar design was a failure and crashed into the Potomac River on December 8, 1903.

Meanwhile, the Wright Brothers were carrying out experiments with controllable box-kite gliders. From 1900 to 1903, they scientifically advanced the development of their various gliders until they felt certain of their ability to control such aircraft in powered flight.

The rest is history—on the morning of December 17, 1903, with Orville at the controls, man’s first flight in a powered air machine took to the air at Kill Devil Hill, North Carolina, remaining in the air for 12 seconds. Three additional flights were made the same day, with the brothers taking turns flying the machine. The last flight, with Wilbur at the controls, lasted 59 seconds and covered a distance of 852 feet.

Only three newspapers in the country carried any mention of the flight, the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot* and the *Cincinnati Enquirer* being the only two that gave front-page space to the event.

Source: *A Chronicle of the Aviation Industry in America 1903-1947*

“Name the Plane”

The airplane that I asked you to identify in the last issue of the Hangar Digest is the McDonnell Douglas C-9A “Nightingale”.

The Nightingale is a modified version of the McDonnell Douglas DC-9. It is the only aircraft in the inventory specifically dedicated to the movement of litter and ambulatory patients. The C-9A is capable of airlifting 40 litter patients, 40 ambulatory patients or various combinations thereof. A hydraulically operated folding ramp allows for efficient loading and offloading of litter patients and special medical equipment. It has ceiling receptacles for securing intravenous bottles, a special care area with a separate ventilation system for patients requiring isolation or intensive care and eleven vacuum and therapeutic oxygen outlets in sidewall service panels. Electrical outlets throughout the cabin permit the use of cardiac monitors, respirators, incubators and infusion pumps. Aft-facing commercial airline-type seats are available for ambulatory patients. The normal crew consists of an aircraft commander, co-pilot, two flight nurses, three aeromedical evacuation technicians and one flying crew chief.

The 375th Airlift Wing at Scott AFB, Illinois operates the C-9A Nightingale for the Air Mobility Command. C-9As are also assigned to the 374th Airlift Wing at Yokota Air Base, Japan and stationed in Europe at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. A C-9A will soon be added to the AMC Museum’s aircraft collection.

Of the readers submitting an entry, all identified the aircraft as the C-9A Nightingale. Our randomly selected winner of the “Name the Plane” contest is Colonel (Ret) John W. Burt of San Diego, California and he will receive the book “Airlift Military Air Transport: The Illustrated History”. Congratulations!

This time I ask that you to identify the airplane depicted below including the manufacturer, mission, design and series (if applicable); i.e., Boeing B-17G. Please send your entry either by letter, e-mail, fax or post card to any of the addresses listed on the last page. **Please do not leave your entry by phone.** I will designate each correct response with a number ID from which I will randomly select one winner. Please send your entry as soon as possible and please include a return address. The winner will receive a book selection from the museum’s gift shop. Good luck and thank you for your participation!

(Museum staff and volunteers are not eligible)



Around the Bases: Pope AFB, North Carolina

Pope Air Force Base adjoins Fort Bragg near Fayetteville, North Carolina and is the home of the **43rd Airlift Wing (Air Mobility Command)**.

The development of air power during the last century changed the global perspective. The Wright brothers accomplished the first sustained power flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina on 17 December 1903. Fifteen years later, in 1918, bi-planes and observation balloons began using a pea field north of the newly established Army artillery training post at Camp Bragg as a landing strip.

Lieutenant Harley Pope landed his JN-4 “Jenny” at the field on 28 December 1918 where he and Sergeant Walter Flemming mapped an air mail route between Emerson Field at Camp Jackson, South Carolina and Newport News, Virginia. Lt. Pope, stationed at Emerson Field, knew the terrain within the South Carolina flying area and Sgt. Flemming, stationed at Langley Field, Virginia, knew the tidal basin region around Newport News. The field at Camp Bragg was the waypoint on their flight path.

Following the Atlantic Coastline Railroad (early flyers used topographical resources such as rivers and railroad tracks to aid in their journeys), the first leg of their trip to Newport News was accomplished with only minor engine problems. The two pilots then left Newport News on 1 January 1919 for the return leg. Engine trouble forced them to land their “Jenny” at Weldon, North Carolina. Following a week of repairs they departed Weldon on 7 January. In the twilight of that winter day, civilians living along the Cape Fear River, north of Fayetteville heard an airplane and a thunderous crash. The plane broke through the trees along the river and slammed into a stanchion of the Clarendon Bridge. Authorities from Camp Bragg found the airplane in the swollen river but the bodies of the two airmen were not found for several months.

Members of Lt. Pope’s squadron, the 276th Aero Squadron, received movement orders to the field at Camp Bragg in February 1919. As a memorial to Lt. Pope, the War Department officially established the field as Pope Field on 5 April 1919. There was no runway, just a wide open field surrounded by a pine forest.

Observation planes and balloons occupied Pope Field for the first eight years. Missions ranged from mapping terrain, artillery spotting, forest fire detection and carrying the mail. The airfield had four hangars and a motor pool with three vehicles. The base commander was a lieutenant in charge of 26 enlisted men.

The airfield gained national prominence in 1927 when Major Carl “Tooey” Spatz conducted bombing tests from the airfield. He used 14 Keystone and Curtis bombers to demolish a bridge 65 miles west of the base on the Pee Dee River. It was the first demonstration of precision aerial bombing. The test demonstrated that the use of high explosive aerial bombing could destroy permanent concrete structures; thus, increasing the tactical capabilities of the Army Air Corps.

The Army upgraded the base during the 1930s by installing a lighting system, a ground beacon, headquarters buildings, dispensary, officers and NCO quarters, a fire station and six large hangars. On one day in 1935, Pope Field hosted 535 aircraft as the Army Air Service practiced large scale operations along the East Coast. In 1940, paved runways replaced the dirt open fields.

With the outbreak of World War II, the tempo of activities at Pope Field quickened. The 82nd Airborne Division moved to Camp Bragg in 1941 and the base developed into a major troop carrier training base with various troop carrier squadrons transiting through Pope learning paratrooper operations. Throughout the war, air and ground crews trained with Army airborne units in preparation for airborne and aerial re-supply missions.

Following the war, Pope Field became Pope Air Force Base with the creation of the Air Force on 17 September 1947. The base served as the home of the 10th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing from 1947 until

(Continued on the following page)



Around the Bases: Pope AFB, North Carolina (Cont.)

1950, when Headquarters Ninth Air Force moved to the base. During the next four years, the base's primary mission dealt with training forward air controllers for the Korean War. In 1954, the base was turned over to the recently arrived, 464th Troop Carrier Wing. With the arrival of the 464th, a major expansion of the facility followed. The main runway, taxiways and ramp were all expanded to support the 464th's C-119 Flying Boxcars.

During the late 1950s and into the 60s, aircraft upgrade was the primary trend at Pope. The C-123 Provider began replacing the C-119 in 1958 and in 1963 the first C-130 Hercules arrived. The C-130, with its ability to operate from short and unimproved landing strips, expanded the wing's overall capability.

As America became involved in Vietnam, the need to train large numbers of aircrews in the unique capabilities of the C-130 led to the establishment of an aircrew training unit. The drop zones, low-level routes and dirt landing strips at Fort Bragg became familiar to the men bound for Southeast Asia. The training gained improved the aircrew preparedness for combat duty.

In August 1971 the 464th deactivated and the 317th Tactical Airlift Wing was reassigned to Pope from Lockbourne AFB, Ohio. While at Lockbourne, one of the most important roles the 317th would play was its involvement in the development and testing of the Adverse Weather Delivery System (AWADS). This system proved its worth in combat during Vietnam.

In 1983 the 317th led the airborne assault during the invasion of Granada. Just before dawn on October the 25th, 18 C-130s airdropped and airdropped elite Army Rangers at Point Salines. Pope's airplanes, air and ground crews provided the bulk of the Air Force effort in Granada.

Six years later in 1989, the 317th again led the way in Operation JUST CAUSE (The U.S. invasion of Panama) and in 1990 they deployed more than 40,000 combat troops and nearly 65 million pounds of cargo to Southwest Asia in support of Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. Pope's tactical airlifters played a major role in General Norman Schwarzkopf's flanking maneuver "Hail Mary" that led to the surrender of Iraq's elite Republican Guard.

Pope AFB underwent a major change in 1992. The 317th reorganized under the Air Forces Composite Wing structure and all of its combat support personnel and equipment were transferred to the newly activated 23rd Wing (Air Combat Command). The activation of the 23rd began a new era of support for Fort Bragg's XVIII Airborne Corps and the 82nd Airborne Division. As the Air Force continued to streamline its operations, the 317th deactivated at Pope and in 1997 it was re-activated as the 317th Airlift Group at Dyess AFB, Texas. (*See Hangar Digest, Vol. 3, Issue 1*)

In April 1997, Pope AFB once again saw changes reflecting the Air Forces goal to realign and streamline its airlift operations. The changes resulted in the activation of the **43rd Airlift Wing (Air Mobility Command)** as the host wing assuming the assets of the 23rd. The 23rd, redesignated the 23rd Fighter Group (ACC), would assume its new role as a base tenant unit.

Since the 43rd Airlift Wing's reactivation at Pope AFB, it has participated in ALLIED FORCE, SOUTHERN WATCH, NORTHERN WATCH, CONSTANT VIGIL and other global operations. It continues to support exercises and deployments of the 23rd Fighter Group with maintenance and support personnel.

Team Pope remains the Air Force's supreme tactical team for joint operation. The 43rd Airlift Wing received recognition at AMC Rodeo 2000 as the world's best Airdrop Wing, Best Joint Airdrop Inspection Team and the Best C-130 Wing. Teamed with tenant Air Combat Command units, Air Force Special Operation Units, the Army's XVIII Airborne Corps and elements of the US Special Operations Command, the 43rd provides rapid mobility and agile combat support to a joint team capable of global attack and precision engagement.

Source: <https://www.pope.af.mil> & <https://www.dyess.af.mil>

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The Hangar Digest is published quarterly and is dedicated to the preservation of our airlift and tanker heritage. All articles, unless otherwise noted, are written by the editor. All photographs are the courtesy of the Air Mobility Command Museum unless otherwise designated.

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